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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3916
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3781
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1915
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7170
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SUBJECT: CZECH AMBASSADOR ON KARIMOV, ANDIJON AND WAY
FORWARD

Classified By: P/E Chief Ted Burkhalter; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) AMB paid a courtesy call September 24 on Czech Ambassador Alex Fojtik, who also represents the EU Presidency in Tashkent. Fojtik, who is nearing the end of his tour after nearly three and a half years in Uzbekistan, was extremely cynical about prospects for genuine democratic reform in the short term. Rather than directly pursue a human rights agenda, he urged us to focus more generally on (a) greater use of mass media and press freedom, as a way of gradually acquainting Uzbekistan with democratic values; (b) eliminating corruption and money-laundering; and (c) education of the next generation. Fojtik is convinced that Karimov's one-man rule, with its reliance on so-called clans whom he alternates alliances with, will not disappear even if Karimov himself exits the stage. That said, Fojtik does not believe Karimov will actually exit anytime soon. To the contrary, he suggested Karimov may try to mark his next presidential term as the first of a new series of seven-year terms.

¶2. (C) On Andijon, Fojtik (speaking personally, not for the EU) subscribes to the view that there was a serious insurgent threat, that the numbers of demonstrators reported by human rights activists and outside commentators were vastly inflated, and that some 10-20 percent of the crowd was armed. Fojtik claims that the EU investigators who have twice visited Uzbekistan to look into the events were given full cooperation by the Uzbek authorities) but chose to give Brussels a one-sided report critical of Karimov, which led to sanctions he deems to have been useless. He was contemptuous of Uzbek human rights activists, saying half of them were corrupt, and pointed to the opposition in Belarus as a better example of a serious opposition. Again speaking privately, he said the EU does not understand Central Asia, and the EU's strategy for the region is flawed because it does not have a realistic grasp of how to handle Uzbekistan.

¶3. (C) Fojtik sees the economy as Karimov's weak link, and doubts the President is getting the full story from his advisers) though he thought the role of some key advisers was growing and urged us to pay close attention to deciphering these linkages.

Comment: Rewriting history, writing off Andijon

14. (C) Fojtik stressed that he was not speaking for the EU. Still, his comments are notable for two reasons. First, they reflect a desire to move past Andijon, that we have heard from European diplomats - such as the OSCE delegation of PermReps that visited earlier this month, the British Ambassador and the new Italian Ambassador. These observers increasingly take the view that as a pragmatic matter, the GOU simply is not going to revisit the Andijon events, and linking continued sanctions to an international inquiry is pointless and counterproductive. The British Ambassador told AMB and DCM on September 27 that this poses an immense problem of principle for the EU, which must decide in mid-October whether to renew sanctions. He hinted that some amelioration of visa sanctions could occur. Second, Fojtik,s comments reflect a version of Andijon that, while not necessarily completely wrong (we do not know the exact facts ourselves) does seem a bit too convenient for the GOU. We certainly would question the high percentage of protesters Fojtik believes were armed.

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